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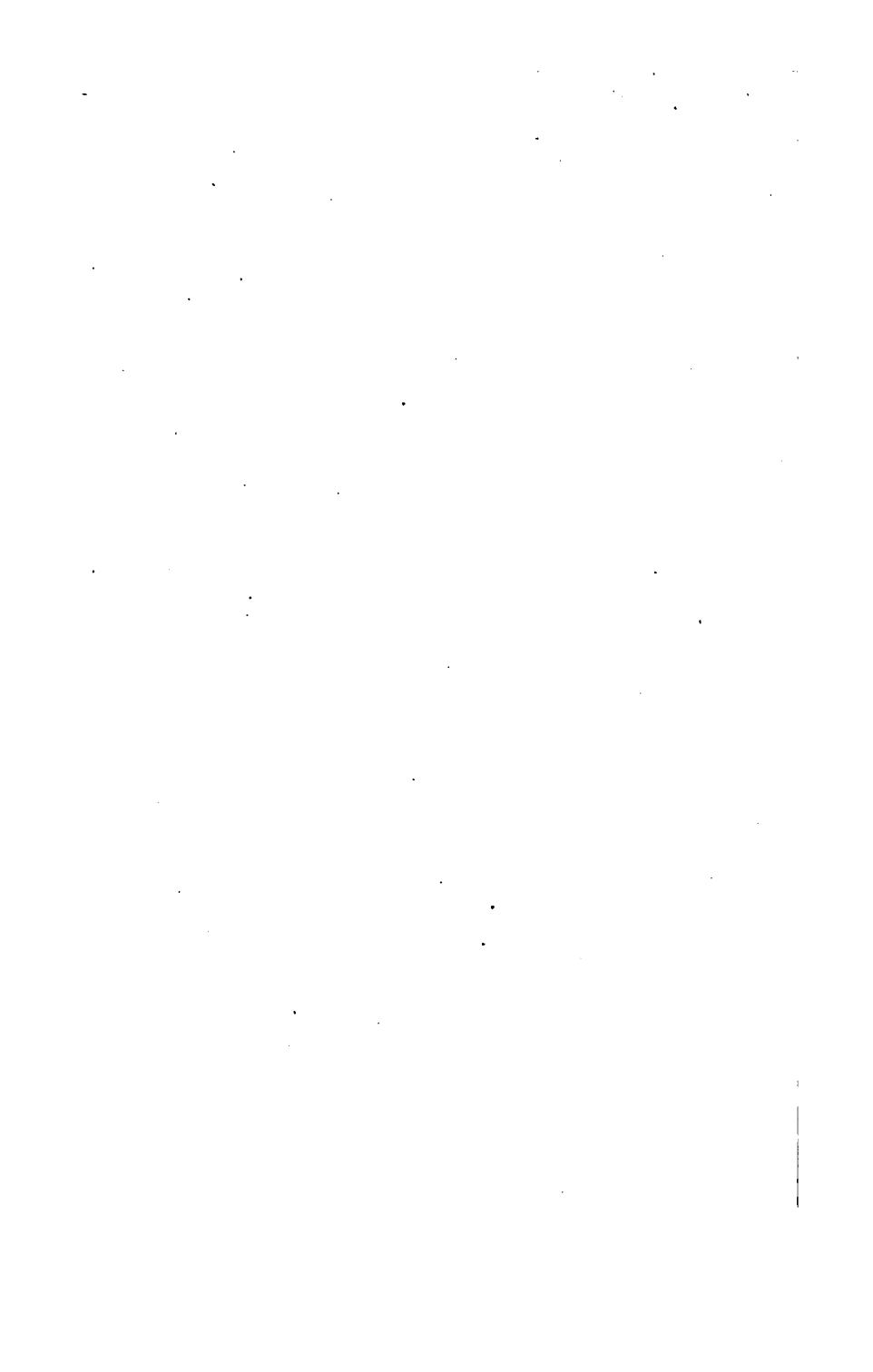
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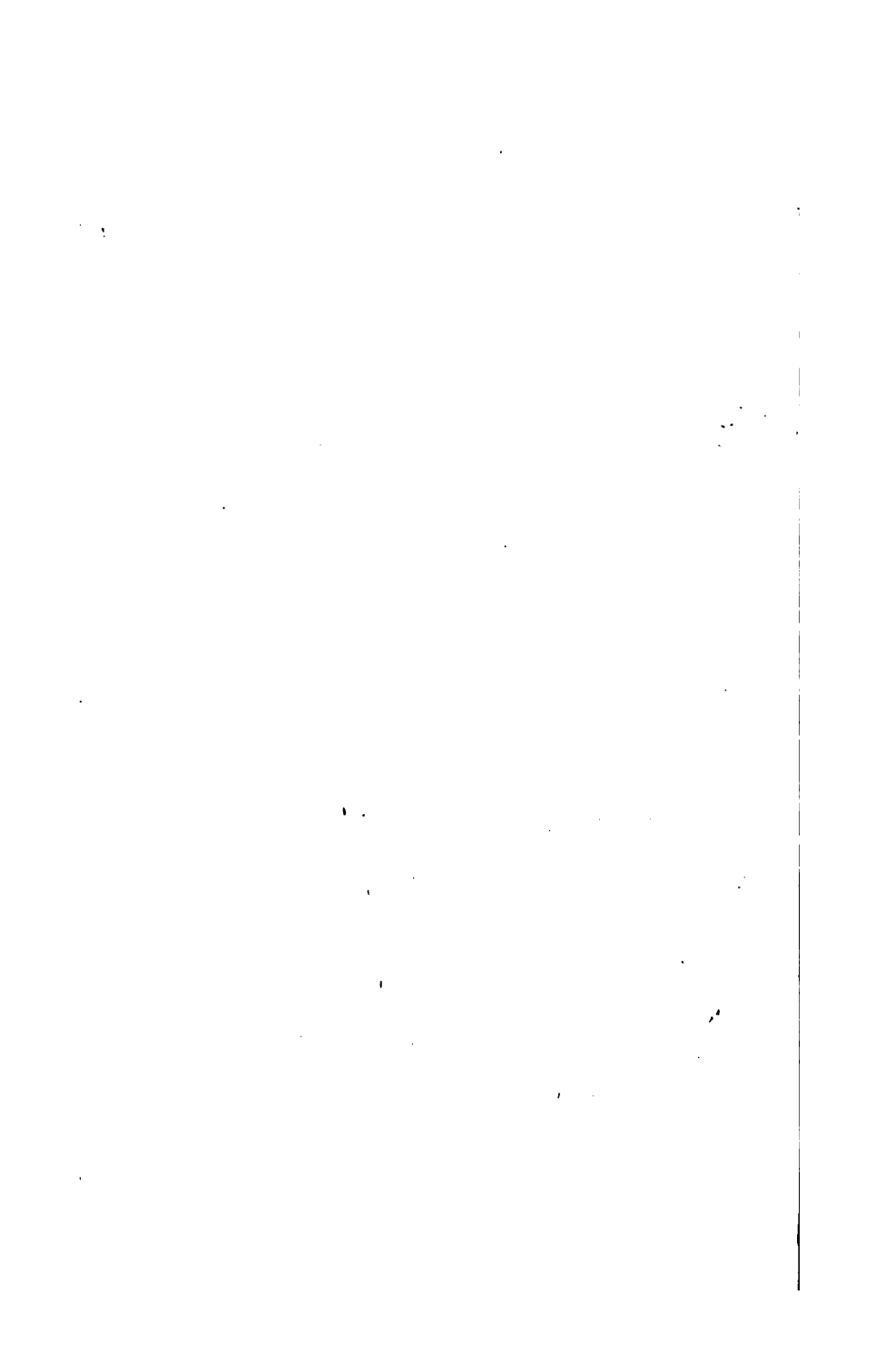


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CHRIST IN THE WILDERNESS.

MATT. IV. 1—11.

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterwards an hungered. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

Again the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan, for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

CHRIST IN THE WILDERNESS.

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THE

TEMPTATION OF CHRIST

IN THE WILDERNESS.

WE stand to day on that memorable battle-field where those laurels were won which encircle *our* brows, and that triumph was achieved which makes us victorious before the conflict, and even in death more than conquerors, through him that hath loved us. (Rom. viii. 37)

Never was there a battle fought more wonderful in its nature, more important in its consequences, nor one which so deeply affects our everlasting interests.

It is good for us to sit down awhile, and give ourselves to the absorbing contemplation of this great sight.

I.

THE LEADING INTO THE WILDERNESS.

TOGETHER with the consecration and anointing of our Lord to the mediatorial office by the water of the Jordan, and the baptism of the Holy Ghost, did Jesus receive from heaven the divine testimony that he was the only begotten Son of God in whom the Father was well pleased. (Matt. iii. 16, 17.)

The Sonship of our Lord, and his essential unity with the Father, appear to have been to him, in the days of his flesh, more an object of faith than of sight, perception, or feeling. At moments, at least, he could, in such a manner, conceal his Godhead from his view, and hide it in the back ground, that he apprehended it only in simple faith on the bare word of the Father.

It was not for the disciples only, but for himself also, that the voice was heard on different occasions from heaven, "This is my beloved Son"—for himself, to strengthen his faith, which, sometimes, as for instance, when he was forsaken of the Father on the Cross, was bare and simple trust in the Father's love, without any sensible experience of that endearing relationship. (Matt. xxvii. 46.)

Consecrated and divinely invested with his priestly office, Jesus immediately hastened into the depths of

the wilderness. He who led him, was, according to the evangelists, the Holy Ghost. (Verse 1. Mark i. 12.)

Was the Saviour aware for what purpose the Spirit led him into the wilderness? Perhaps only in part; the great and special cause the Father may have concealed from him. We learn also from our own experience, that it is not always the will of the Holy Ghost to make known to us beforehand his designs in leading us.

He not unfrequently conducts us in entire darkness. We are conscious of his inward call, "Arise, and depart to such a place, or in such circumstances, or at such a time." We ask, "why? for what purpose?" but receive no answer. The command is only given yet louder, and with more urgency in our heart, "Go, haste, delay not." We inquire again, what can be the meaning of this internal impulse, but it remains a mystery. We must proceed in darkness, and should we object, the probability is a tumult in the conscience, and a bitter feeling of the divine displeasure in our soul. We must go, we are obliged, and not till afterwards is made known to us the reason. (John xiii. 7.)

Here, Philip finds a chamberlain who has been awaiting his exposition of the Scriptures, (Acts viii. 27.) and there, Elijah meets a widow, whose soul he should enrich with heavenly treasure. (1 Kings xvii. 10.) At one place a disconsolate brother cries to us, even when yet we are a great way off, "Ah, you come to me as an angel sent from God;" and in another place it is made manifest to us, in a different way, wherefore the Spirit hath called and sent us: either the sun arises upon our path, and all becomes clear and bright around us, or

the Spirit gives us some slight intimations of his purpose; but all beyond this, and that which is most important, he keeps back, hidden from our eyes.

One says, I must retire to my chamber to pray, or go to such a house to succour and assist an afflicted brother, or to a particular place to render some special service; but of all that which is designed for us in such places, more than the service, assistance, or prayer—that we shall wrestle with God, (Gen. xxxii. 24.) or become humble and contrite in spirit, (Isaiah lvii. 15; lxvi. 2.) or pass through the purifying furnace, (Mal. iii. 3. Isai. xlviii. 10.) or meet the hosts of Mahanaim, (Gen. xxxii. 1, 2.) or whatever it may be—of all this no mention has been made to us. It shall become known to us hereafter in the way of experience.

It seems to have been thus with our Saviour. *He went into the wilderness half in light and half in darkness.* Perhaps he knew only generally, that he must go into the wilderness to fast, suffer want, and endure hardship, and in the depths of extreme humiliation and poverty enter upon the work of his priesthood. So much the Spirit unfolded to him, but the severe, the fearful temptation which awaited him appears, according to the counsel of the Father, to have been carefully hidden from his view. The unexpectedness of the assault would add severity to the conflict, that the triumph might be the greater and more glorious.

II.

THE FAST.

Jesus went into the wilderness to fast. So far extended his light at that time, and yet farther—to its great design, its mysterious signification. Was not then the fast of Jesus in the special plan of him who led him into the wilderness? By all means. That he should be so tried was according to the purpose of God, but only a part of it.

Do you ask, then, *on what account it was necessary that Jesus should fast*, and why in such a dreadful solitude so painfully, so long—forty days and forty nights? In reply, I would remark, that it was of a very different description from that of Moses on Mount Sinai, and other saints.

The fast of Jesus was something more than a devotional exercise and preparation for the priestly office, it was an initiatory work of sacrifice. The key, not only of the temptation, but of the fast of our Lord, is to be found behind the gate of a lost paradise. It is an expiation for Adam's eating of the forbidden tree, (Gen. iii. 6.) an atonement for his guilt, a satisfying passion.

Did the progenitor of the human race dwell in the

happy plains of paradise? We behold the second Adam in the desolate wilderness. Did the first man, who was of the earth, earthy, (1 Cor. xv. 47.) live amidst lovely trees and delicious fruits in the garden of Eden? The second man, who is the Lord from heaven, must endure hunger in a wilderness, amid stones and rank weeds, where not an ear of corn grew to relieve the extreme necessity of his nature. Did our forefather enjoy the most delightful communion with God and the holy angels, and the society of his spotless wife? Jesus, on the contrary, was banished into the most gloomy desert; he was with the wild beasts, as Mark informs us, (Mark i. 13.) and with the old serpent, with Satan and his angels. O, how great the contrast! But thus it was ordained of God.

Our Surety and Representative, by fasting and suffering want in the dreary and inhospitable wilderness, *made atonement in the sinner's stead, for the sinful presumption with which Adam, in the face of an express divine warning and threat, stretched forth his hand to the fruit of the forbidden tree.* This he did for his people, and they have no farther atonement to make to all eternity.

But you by whom the everlasting satisfaction of the Lamb of God is not estimated aright; you see in the circumstances of our Lord in the wilderness, a true portrait of your own coming destiny. Thus must you ever dwell in the eternal wilderness, and when you are an hungered, they shall thrust a stone into your mouth instead of bread; and when you shall suffer thirst, you must swallow flames instead of water, and you shall live as though among wild beasts and hissing

serpents, and you shall be alone, in solitude, amidst the multitudes of the damned, for in hell there is no endearing intercourse nor friendship; there, hate and selfishness bear sway, and each one is too much engrossed with his own pain and suffering to sympathize with another. And the duration of this misery is called ETERNITY.

With this truth one would suppose we could make rocks leap from their everlasting beds, and hills tremble. But your hearts do not tremble. Alas! they are harder than the stony rock.

Fasts are also observed in the kingdom of God; bodily and spiritual fasts, of various kinds, painful and joyous.

The most joyous are celebrated *in the spring-time of the new life*, at the beginning of conversion, after the first assurance of divine grace, after the first manifestation of love from the heavenly bridegroom, when God calleth the young child out of Egypt. Then it is not needful to urge us to self-denial. All this is done at once and without solicitation. How does the man fly as with wings from the scenes of pleasure and dissipation of an infatuated world; how can he "fill his belly with the husks that the swine do eat," (Luke xv. 16.) after he has drunk of the wine of the "goodly land," and partaken of the "milk and honey" with which it flows? (Deut. iii. 25. Exod. iii. 8.) How can he take pleasure in the sounds which control the dance, or in the song of the voluptuary, after he has heard the harp of David struck by his kingly hand? How can theatrical representations and the tricks of the juggler afford gratification to any one, after he has seen heaven with all its glory opened

before him ? and how can he any longer recline upon the couch of ease and of revelry, when he has beheld Him whom his soul loveth suspended on the accursed tree, bleeding and crowned with thorns ? Away, then—away quickly with the shadow of your pitiful delights, and with the tinsel of your vanities. This is our day of fast.

It is often a subject of debate and inquiry, whether certain pleasures or enjoyments are compatible with Christianity or not. Let us cease to ask such questions, and become Christians, then shall we know what is consistent and what is not, and how far one that is born again, an heir of God and his kingdom, may proceed in such things.

There is yet another fast in a state of grace, and one of a more painful description, *when the soul is led, not from the field of the world to the green pastures of the Lamb, but from the latter into the wilderness*, and this is a very bitter reverse. We were—ah ! how unspeakably happy, in the bosom of Jesus. Such sweet sensations and emotions, such tender delights and pleasures, such touching and affecting apprehensions of the grace and nearness of our Saviour, pervaded and filled our souls, that we earnestly desired, from this blessed foretaste of heavenly joys, to pass at once into their full fruition in paradise.

The south wind blew upon our garden, and the spices thereof flowed out ; (Cant. iv. 16.) the grapes of Canaan refreshed our lips, and the pleasurable sensations of love distilled like the dew of the early dawn upon our soul. O, how abundantly were we satisfied—the sorrows of this world were utterly forgotten. But, before we were aware, a fast was ap-

pointed, and the bridegroom was taken from us. (Matt. ix. 15.) The fountains of milk and honey were dried up, and the soul, deprived of her refreshment, sat motionless, with her harp unstrung, upon the glowing sand, thirsting for the dew of heaven to fall upon the parched ground.

These are the fast-days of the child of God in the wilderness. *Happy is he whose comforts are derived from Christ and his word, and not from feelings and emotions.* "Bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure," (Isaiah xxxiii. 16.) If he has not sensible perception, he has, at least, faith; and if he is destitute of feeling, yet the ground of his confidence is secure. He shelters himself beneath the rock of the sure promise of his God, and he knows that though the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, yet God's kindness shall not depart from him, neither shall the covenant of his peace be removed. (Isa. liv. 10.)

And *this fast in the wilderness, when it is of God's appointment, is good and wholesome.* The same love which dispenses our food to-day, leaves us to-morrow to suffer hunger, and keep a day of fasting and abstinence. What more do we need, if only to the hand of grace we look for guidance? Let it lead us as it will.

III.

THE TEMPTATIONS.

JESUS went into the wilderness to fast, but yet more than this was designed in the purpose of God. What says the evangelist? "*Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.*" These are fearful words. The Holy Ghost leads the Son of God into the presence of the devil, and for what purpose? In plain and unequivocal words it is written, that he might be tempted of the devil. How remarkable. But this dark and wondrous event speaks comfort to you, O ye heirs of the kingdom. It would encourage your hearts, ye troubled souls. It is recorded for your instruction.

Let none among you suppose that he who goeth about as a roaring lion is free and unrestrained, and can fall upon you when he will; that he can launch his darts according to his pleasure; and lay his snares unperceived by the captain of the hosts of the Lord, (Jos. v. 14.)

Far otherwise. Our leader has him ever in his sight, and holds him firmly bound by his strong word. Even Satan himself has found what the Preacher

declares, that "the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong." (Eccles. ix. 11.) In vain does he attack any respecting whom Jesus has said to him, "touch not mine anointed." A wall of fire encircles such an one by that word of his Master; a protecting wall over which the fiery darts of the wicked one can find no passage. (Zech. ii. 5.) But every assault of Satan is by the express permission of the Lord Jesus, (Job i. 11, 12,) and consequently for the spiritual good of the believer; and the line is pointed out by the kingly sceptre, with minute exactness, how far he may go, and no farther. What power, then, doth the wicked one possess? He is led forth and made a show of openly, and Immanuel triumphs over him in himself. (Col. ii. 15. marginal reading.) Henceforth he is among those principalities in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, which must bow to the sceptre of Jesus. (Eph. i. 21; Phil. ii. 10.) The Lord employs him as he did a Nebuchadnezzar, a Korah, and other outcasts, as a rod in his hand, for the good of his people; and when he has made a sufficient use of this terrible scourge, he will break it in pieces—he will lay hold of the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil and satan, and shut up and seal him in the bottomless pit. (Rev. xx. 2, 3.)

Rejoice then, ye little flock of God, that the devil is under the direction and control of the Good Shepherd, and is made use of only for your benefit.

As often as the fiery darts of the wicked one hiss around you, remember, beloved, that it is the Lord, even the Spirit, who has led you into the wilderness, who has placed you in the conflict, and who is himself your strength and shield.

All the temptations of the children of God are

permitted for one great purpose, they shall *make manifest the graces concealed in their souls.*

Sometimes it is pleasing to the Lord *himself to behold these hidden things brought to light.* For he delighteth in his work.

It was when our father Abraham had, in every respect, completed the preparations for his painful offering on Mount Moriah, that the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, "Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me." (Gen. xxii. 11, 12.) This our Lord well knew, but he wished to make manifest the fear of God which he had wrought in his heart, and which it was his delight to behold.

And so must many of the children of grace, in our own day, be tried and tempted, that the Lord Jesus may witness their perseverance in prayer, and hearing of the word; the storm is sent, that the Lord may behold them believingly pass onward over the troubled waters in their right course, and himself conduct them to the haven of peace. (Mark vi. 47, 48.) It is this that gives him joy.

We ought not, perhaps, to speak thus to those afflicted ones. They would think that we were mocking, for they perceive in themselves no graces in which the Lord should delight; but they are seen and acknowledged of him.

Frequently doth the Lord suffer his children to fall into temptation, not so much himself to behold that which is concealed in their hearts, as *to make it manifest to their brethren and sisters.*

For this end he reveals to us the faith of Abraham, the patience of Job, the love of Moses, the zeal of Elijah,

the humility and ardour of the woman of Canaan, that we may give glory to his power, which has wrought so mightily in the feeble children of men.

But are we disheartened, and do we think, that such holy ones may well expect an entrance into the kingdom of God, but what hope is there for us? Then he brings at one time a David, at another a Peter, before our view—grapes from which, in the wine-vat, were extracted not only wine, but the bitter waters of sin; and such a sight restores our confidence, especially when we hear that Simon is not the less called “a stone,” and David “a man after God’s own heart.”

And so has it often been, that men, from whom holiness beamed forth with especial splendour, and who, beyond others, have enjoyed the high estimation of the church, have yet at length, under the power of temptation, been so shorn of their beams and goodly colouring, and their weakness and sinfulness have become so manifested; or, to change the figure, from a noble stream they have dwindled into an insignificant brook, which loses itself in the sand; that when compared with that which they once were, we can scarcely recognize the same individuals.

This the Lord permits to take place, that mortal man may beware of idols, may keep his graces bright, and give honour to Him only to whom it is due.

One great benefit of the temptations to which we are subjected is, that we may learn more of ourselves, that we may see the sin that dwelleth in us, and humbly lie in the dust. (Rom. vii. 17.)

We children of men too easily deem ourselves righteous, but Jesus calls the ungodly and sinners to repentance. We too quickly ascend the mountain, but

Jesus would see us in the valley. He would humble our pride. And therefore it is, that he suffers the devil, for a little while, to stir up the sink of our corrupt nature, that the noisome odour may invade our senses, and the brood of serpents and vipers, which lay lurking beneath, may crawl upon the surface before our eyes. The Lord permits the wicked one at times to arouse tumultuously the swarm of unrighteous thoughts and desires which slumber in the inmost recesses of our souls, that we may be sensible of the evils with which the temple of God is infested, and never think of pride or boasting more. He suffers the devil sometimes to invade us, and to blow the trumpet to awaken the evil propensities within. How do we wonder that they are there. We had thought that we had long ago banished them by our holy exercises, and that the house was rendered clean. But now we find it quite otherwise.

When so humbled, the bride is again conscious that the false colouring has faded from her cheeks, and is, in her own estimation, as at first, black and without comeliness, and lies low in her first repentance, and loves with her first love. (Cant. i. 5. Rev. ii. 4.)

There, breaks at once beneath our feet the topmost step in the ladder of our sanctity, and not even the lowest will serve to support us any longer, but we lie upon the ground, and are conscious that we are poor sinners, such as, perhaps, we had never seen ourselves before.

Robbed of our decorations and ornaments, we hide ourselves with shame out of sight, and again rejoice from our inmost soul that another will clothe us with a wedding garment, that a cross was erected on Golgotha, and that one sits upon the throne who is not only called Righteousness, but Grace.

IV.

THE DESIGN OF OUR LORD'S TEMPTATION.

WE have already seen why God permits his children to be tempted.

The inquiry then arises, *on what account did he suffer the Lord Jesus to be so tried?* And here do we most solemnly protest, on the outset, against that most degrading doctrine, which irreverently declares that Jesus was placed in the fire of temptation, that he might, by wrestling and praying, overcome the sins which he bore in his flesh and in his members. No, we cannot endure to hear this of our Saviour.

That he appeared *in the likeness* of sinful flesh, we allow; but it was only in the likeness, not in the sinful flesh itself; (Rom. viii. 3.) and if he was in all points tempted like as we are, yet was there one point excepted, namely, sin. (Heb. iv. 15.)

Blessed be God, that his word does not leave us in doubt as to this matter. *With our Mediator's perfect and entire freedom from sin stands or falls the whole building of our Gospel hope.* Were the white linen of his righteousness stained with the smallest speck of ungodly emotions, could any one prove this to us, then might the churches be closed, the Bible burnt, our confidence cast away, and despair prevail.

For then would Jesus not be our Saviour, and the price which he has paid would be inadequate and unsatisfying.

The temptations which beset our Lord were very different from those which we are wont to experience. He encountered them, not for himself, but for us, and in our stead. They belong to the sufferings connected with his offering *as our substitute.*

We saw Adam tempted by the serpent, but he wantonly permitted himself to be hurried along by the overwhelming torrent. The second Adam, to atone for this, sustained a more painful assault, broke the spears of the enemy, signally overcame the adversary, and yielded to the Father a perfect obedience.

Adam, through disobedience, became the prey of the devil; the second Adam bore for him the curse, descended from the throne of the majesty on high, to mingle with wicked spirits in the regions of the lost. Unexampled humiliation! The Almighty God touched by the murderous hands of Satan! the King of the Universe hissed at by the old serpent! the Most Holy beset and surrounded by the powers of darkness! and the Lord of Hosts a sport for the cursed spirits of hell, and tempted and challenged to that which is most sinful! Most horrible situation for the Son of God! the most appalling that we can imagine: for we are placed by nature nearer to the devil, who, as our Lord declares, is, in our natural state, our father, (John viii. 44.) we bear his likeness, and therefore his foulness is not so abhorrent to us as it must be to him who dwelleth in light, and is himself the light. (1 Tim. vi. 16. John i. 9.)

Truly no small anguish must it have been to him

thus to dwell in the midst of devils. But even to this pool and pit was the Son of God obliged to come down, and thus the wild boars of Belial encompassed him with their terrors, that a payment might be made for the enormous guilt that man had heaped up; and amid such resisting powers and obstacles was he necessitated, alone, in strife and battle to do the will of God, and with the glories of his perfect obedience to cover the disobedience of Adam and his seed.

Another design of the temptations of Jesus was, that he might become for us a High Priest touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Such, indeed, he could have been without experiencing the assaults which we must endure; but now that he has made such a display of his love, we poor children of men can more easily believe in his sympathy, and we can with the greater freedom pour out our heart before him, and show him all our complaint.

When two men meet who can speak of the same trials and of the same buffetings of Satan, O what better preparation can there be for an intimate union, for a free communication, and tender sympathy? They pour out their souls to each other. Their hearts overflow, and the time passes rapidly.

In the presence of one, on the contrary, who has never felt as we have, we are mute. We have no inclination to communicate to him our state, since we fear that he can neither understand us nor feel for our case. And we should certainly have felt much more distance with our heavenly friend, if he had not become a partaker of our sorrows.

But now the thought affects us deeply that he himself was tempted in all points like as we are, and

knows by his own experience the most bitter anguish of our souls. If then no man understand us, we have a friend near at hand to whom we need only unfold our state and circumstances, and he knows at once how to encourage our souls.

His fellow-feeling extends even to the darkest night of the soul, the most fearful depths of internal suffering and distress.

You can sit under no juniper-tree beneath which He has not already sat ; no thorn can wound you which has not made His heart to bleed ; no fiery dart can strike you which has not first been hurled at His sacred head. Why then should we doubt of his compassion.

Yes, believe it only, beloved, whenever you lie in the furnace ; the eyes of the refiner are upon you, (Mal. iii. 3.) and the heart of the High and Holy One, whose love is more tender than a mother's, bleeds over you for sympathy in heaven. (Isa. xlix. 15 ; Heb. iv. 15.)

These then, with respect to the world of sinners, were the great designs of mercy and love, in subjecting the Son of God to the fire of temptation.

But it may be inquired, *whether God had not some reference to the tempter himself?* and this we shall be able to answer the more readily, when we clearly understand the position which that fallen prince of angels sustains in the kingdom of spirits.

That satyr-like figure, with horns and hoofs, which is assigned him by popular tradition, has no reality : it is far from the truth, and partakes more of the ridiculous and contemptible, than of that which is great and terrific.

But read and compare together the several scattered notices which the Scriptures in many places afford

respecting these fallen morning-stars, these first of created beings; observe their character and features, which the word of God incidentally depicts, and there is a certain awe and wonder, which, at the sight of the prince of hell, you cannot shake off.

He is that leviathan of whom the Lord speaks, (Job xli.) "Canst thou draw out leviathan with a hook? or his tongue with a cord which thou lettest down? Canst thou put a hook into his nose? or bore his jaw through with a thorn? Will he make many supplications unto thee? Will he speak soft words unto thee? Will he make a covenant with thee? Wilt thou take him for a servant for ever? Wilt thou play with him as with a bird? or wilt thou bind him for thy maidens? Shall thy companions make a banquet of him? Shall they part him among the merchants? Canst thou fill his skin with barbed irons, or his head with fish spears? Lay thine hand upon him, remember the battle, do no more. Behold, the hope of him is in vain. Shall not one be cast down even at the sight of him?"

He is that powerful one of whom testimony is given. "None is so fierce that dare stir him up. Who can discern the face of his garment? or who can come to him with his double bridle? Who can open the doors of his face? His teeth are terrible round about. His scales are his pride, shut up together as with a close seal. One is so near to another, that no air can come between them. They are joined one to another; they stick together, that they cannot be sundered. By his neesings a light doth shine, and his eyes are like the eyelids of the morning. Out of his mouth go burning

lamps, and sparks of fire leap out. Out of his nostrils goeth smoke, as out of a seething-pot or caldron. His breath kindleth coals, and a flame goeth out of his mouth. In his neck remaineth strength, and sorrow is turned into joy before him. The flakes of his flesh are joined together; they are firm in themselves, they cannot be moved. His heart is as firm as a stone, yea, as hard as a piece of the nether millstone. When he raiseth up himself the mighty are afraid. By reason of breakings they purify themselves. The sword of him that layeth at him cannot hold, the spear, the dart, nor the habergeon. He esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood. The arrow cannot make him flee, sling-stones are turned with him into stubble. Darts are counted as stubble: he laugheth at the shaking of a spear. Sharp stones are under him; he spreadeth sharp pointed things upon the mire, he maketh the deep to boil like a pot, he maketh the sea like a pot of ointment. He maketh a path to shine after him: one would think the deep to be hoary. Upon earth there is not his like, who is made without fear. He beholdeth all high things. He is a king over all the children of pride."

Behold, these are the features of this powerful Spirit, who, with regard to his original glory, is nothing more nor less than the idol of the rationalists.

In these great and wondrous ruins of his former glory doth Satan give praise to him who created him. For who is his equal in knowledge and wisdom? who in perseverance, and energy, and power? And yet that which we perceive in him is but the remains of his original splendour. He is set forth in the Scrip-

tures as possessing a certain majesty, not only because he is called a lord, a powerful one, a prince, but also the God of this world. (2 Cor. iv. 4.)

Observe how the apostle Jude speaks of him.—“Michael, the archangel, when contending with the devil, he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, ‘the Lord rebuke thee.’” (Jude 9.)

In the Book of Job we see Satan standing among the angels and spirits, around the throne of God. (Job i.) And the Lord speaks to him, and inquires whether he had considered his servant Job, and after the subtle insinuation of the accuser; “Doth Job fear God for nought?” the Lord gives him power over all that Job had. And thus the devil learned, by this trial of the servant of God, how the strength of the Almighty was made perfect in Job's weakness.

We might almost say, that it was important to God that even this prince of darkness should acknowledge him, and give him honour. And it was so in reality. For it is written, that every knee should bow to him, and every tongue confess that he is God. (Phil. ii. 11.)

And thus, by the temptations of Jesus, was the devil enabled to glance at the sources of the atonement, to see the Lamb of God in his purity, without blemish, to behold the surety in his power, to discharge our debts. Thus also would he learn that Zion is redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness, and not by an arbitrary act; and that no well grounded objection can any more be made against the salvation of sinners.

When the most wise and acute of all the spirits is constrained to admire the wisdom of God—is silent before his counsel—is compelled unwillingly to praise his mighty acts, then doth it redound not a little to the majesty and glory of the Eternal.

In the great day of judgment, and of the manifestation of God, that must be one of the most sacred and solemn moments in which Satan will be compelled openly to acknowledge that honour and praise are due to the Lamb; and when one God, if we may so express it, with trembling reverence shall bow the knee to another. It will be an utterance of praise to God of no less power and greatness than the Hallelujahs of the heavenly host.

V.

THE TEMPTER.

FORTY days and nights had the Lord spent in the lonely desert, fasting, and afterward he was an hungered.

Then came the devil to him openly, but clothed as an angel of light.

He had a two-fold object in view ; first, clearly to ascertain whether Jesus were really the Son of God : and, if he should prove to be so, he meant, if possible, to hurl a rock upon him in the way, and for ever mar his work of saving souls.

I am greatly disposed to believe that which has already been advanced by others, that *the tempter was as yet in doubt as to the identity of the Messiah.*

Jesus had now passed thirty years in the deepest seclusion. The son of a carpenter, he had learned his father's trade ; " in the sweat of his face did he eat bread ;" (Gen. iii. 19.) he lived plainly, and did and said nothing beyond that which other children of men might have said or done. No one supposed that he was more than an amiable person ; and, perhaps, Mary and Joseph were not a little tried in their expectations respecting him, and awaited a voice from heaven,

God veiled his Son so completely, that even the

piercing eyes of Satan might not recognize him in this plain carpenter. Yet the devil could not altogether overlook him.

Among men, no one thought that this simple workman at Joseph's bench could be the Messiah. But Satan was prudent enough not to trust too much to the external appearance of lowliness and poverty. He thought it possible that this carpenter, notwithstanding his outwardly low condition, might, nevertheless, be the Lord; and many things seemed to indicate that thus it was.

He found nothing inconsistent in the supposition that the Redeemer, in such a state of poverty, should commence his task; and many circumstances appeared plainly to indicate that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God. Something of this kind he suspected. As yet he knew nothing certain. He longed for the time when all doubt would be removed.

Had Satan known that Jesus of Nazareth was in reality the Messiah, there would be many things inexplicable in his method of proceeding towards him, as we shall hereafter perceive.

Thoroughly to ascertain this point, whether Jesus were the Christ, was the first aim of the tempter. And so cunningly, at the same time, did the subtle spirit plan his temptation, that if Jesus should prove to be the Messiah, he hoped the redemption which he was about to effect should thereby, on the outset, receive such a shock that it might for ever be frustrated.

The second object of the prince of darkness was, as by the dextrous thrust of an experienced fencer, to push the Saviour from his mediatorial path, and establish his own dominion over mankind for ever.

To effect these purposes, he assumed the character of a well-wisher and friend. He professed that he desired nothing so much as that the work of redemption should be accomplished, and would only show a shorter way to its attainment, and he formed all his projects with as much skill as we might expect to find in one who fell from the greatest height of wisdom and knowledge to the lowest abyss of wickedness.

VI.

THE APTITUDE OF THE TEMPTATIONS.

ARMED with extreme craft and subtlety, the tempter drew near to Jesus. He hoped that the fearful solitude in which our Lord had been, in the dry and barren wilderness, would facilitate his victory.

The fact that Jesus hungered, served to direct his first assault—so well does this murderer of souls know how to turn his weapons against us.

When we are solitary, and apart from the intercourse of men; when no human eye is upon us, no dear brother near to warn and awaken us, no partaker of the same salvation to strengthen our souls; when our thoughts roam freely abroad—then doth the wicked one put forth his strength, and bend his bow with might to speed the poisoned barb to our hearts: and when we hunger or thirst; when our mind is inwardly moving us towards earthly riches or honour, towards ease or enjoyment; then is he at hand, with friendly aspect and professions of devotedness: he respectfully submits one good counsel after another; he unfolds means without number of fulfilling

THE APTITUDE OF THE TEMPTATIONS.

our desires; and however unhallowed these suggestions may be, he so well knows how to disguise and recommend them, and secure them a plausible sanction from holy Scripture, that we think surely an angel of God has met us—yet it is none other but Satan himself in the form of an angel of light.

The unfathomable mystery of his iniquity has perhaps never manifested itself more fully than in the temptations with which he assaulted our Lord.

Can Christ then be tempted? Undoubtedly he can, for St. Paul says, He was, *in all points*, tempted like as we are. (Heb. iv. 15.) Luther translates it (*allenthalben*), “on all sides.” The hand of that venerated man might well have trembled, when he was about to write down the expression “in all points.” With holy shame and sacred reverence he selected, in preference, the phrase “on all sides.”

Our Lord appeared “in the likeness of sinful flesh;” (Rom. viii. 3.) that is, in the nature of man. All the consequences of sin came upon him, but not sin itself. He was tempted, yet without sin.

The sinless propensities and weaknesses of our nature were also the portion of Christ. He hungered and thirsted; he was sensible of fatigue, of rest and refreshment, of joy, and of sorrow.

Of these sinless infirmities, therefore, Satan purposed to make use, in attempting to withdraw the Saviour from the path divinely marked out for him. He presented before him unlawful means of satisfying the desires of nature.

Had the Redeemer yielded even in thought to the base insinuations of the wicked one, then would success have crowned the turpitude and villany of Satan.

The Lamb would not have been without spot or blemish, the Priest would not have been undefiled, the sacrifice would have been unavailing, the whole plan of salvation for ever marred, and the entire race of man would have been irrecoverably lost.

How much, then, depended upon that single event which took place in the wilderness !

How immensely important, how intimately connected with our highest destiny, was the temptation of Jesus. Ought we not, therefore, with all the intensity of which our souls are capable, to watch the development and the issue of this wondrous scene !

VII.

THE FIRST TEMPTATION.

THE tempter awaited a favourable opportunity for his first attack. It was when Jesus hungered that he came to him, and said, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." (ver. 3.) This was the first assault by which Satan endeavoured partly to arrive at a certainty respecting the person of Jesus; partly, in the event of his really proving to be the Lord from heaven, to bring to nought the great work of the atonement.

He applied himself, in the first place, to defile the immaculate soul of the Redeemer, by infusing into it the sin of *distrust*.

As he opened his attack upon our first parents, by deceiving them with respect to the divine command, (Gen. iii. 1.) so also here, "If thou be the Son of God," was nothing else, in reality, than a covert suggestion of the doubt, "Yea, hath God said," a temptation to lead him to question the testimony which, at his baptism, he had received from heaven.

And mark the monstrous and unexampled craftiness of the tempter. In these few words, "If thou be the

Son of God, command that these stones be made bread," under one temptation he concealed numberless snares.

Jesus shall either, as the wicked one supposed, if he be the Son of God, be brought into perplexity respecting his Sonship and the divine testimony—(Matt. iii. 17.) It will appear to him improbable that God should suffer his Son to perish with hunger amidst the stones and barren thorns of the desert, and then his soul will be defiled with unbelief; or he will lay aside the veil, and, by a miracle, give proof, at once, of his God-head, and then he will act in opposition to the counsels of heaven, which have assigned him poverty and suffering, and the hiding of his glory, that he may make atonement for Adam's guilt. (Isa. liii.)

But should this not take place, thought the tempter; should I fail in my endeavour to induce him to leave the path of humility and lowliness, and to make manifest to myself and others the dignity of his nature, yet his extreme sufferings from hunger will, perhaps, impel him to adopt my suggestion. It will seem to him allowable to save himself from starvation, through the power which God has given him. He will make the stones bread, by an act of his own, to satisfy his hunger, and thus put away from himself the cup of bitterness, without the drinking of which to the dregs a propitiation for sin cannot be made. (Rom. iii. 25.)

These were the thoughts of the prince of darkness. He hoped that if Jesus should haply escape one snare, yet he would be entangled in a second, or a third. And, indeed, no more subtle or skilful plan could have been imagined.

Without a miracle put forth in his behalf, the most holy of the children of men would, in such circumstances, have fallen.

Had there been the smallest vein of sin in Christ, it would have been apparent. But no; not one atom soils the purity of his holiness.

He stands alone in the field; no guards protect him. Yet, behold, **HE TRIUMPHS**—Satan is defeated.

The temptation to make stones into bread is one of frequent occurrence. Something of it has been experienced by all the children of God.

There are brethren among us, (I speak of brethren in the Lord,) to whom a fast also has at the same time been appointed. They have no work nor wages, and yet have need of daily bread.

Brethren, you sit down in the wilderness, amidst stones and thorns, and you are an hungered. It would, indeed, be surprising if the tempter did not present such an idea as this:—"Can you really be children of God, when He leaves you to starve?" and then add, "Command that these stones be made bread." It would be a wonder if he did not furnish you with all sorts of counsels, such as "Be mean and flatter, and you shall find favour and gain employment;" or, "deceive and lie, that you may procure wealth;" or, "steal, and save yourselves from famine;" or, "unite yourselves with the enemies of the cross, and they will provide for you;" or, "have recourse to gambling," or whatever it may be.

This is, in fact, "Command that these stones be made bread."

But, my brethren, let the stones remain stones, and expect your bread from Him who has not only promised

to provide it, but also to do for you greater things than this.

Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

Is it not much better to hunger and fast in the name of God, than to possess abundance in the name of the devil?

Your fast-days will cease when they shall have worked out that for which, in the purpose of God, they were designed.

Be not dismayed, you are walking in the wilderness, in order that you may see the truth and glory of the Lord, which are beheld better in the dry and thirsty land than in the rich and fertile fields.

There are some among us *who derive from their profession of religion ignominy and shame*, and know but little joy and comfort. It would be strange if Satan did not present himself, and endeavour to persuade you to suspect the whole of your religion, or to seek that joy which you cannot find in God, in the world, and the things thereof.

My brethren, it is the devil who gives you such counsel, and who would move you in a manner inconsistent with the religion of Jesus, to change into bread the stones of your suffering and sorrow.

We should, I think, prefer, if needs be, to pass the time of our sojourning here in the wilderness with Jesus, to suffer with him, and then participate in his glory; and should cheerfully leave those poisoned viands which the devil delights to prepare for us, to those who shall burn and howl for ever with the prince of darkness in the lake of fire.

“The Lord rebuke thee,” be our cry, whenever we perceive this serpent crawling near our feet.

Thanks be to God, ever since the true Michael contended with Satan, and cast him to the ground, his power over us has been destroyed. (Jude 9; Col. ii. 15.)

In his buffeting he may attack us with hand and foot, so that we may totter and fall, but we shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth us with his hand. (Psalm xxxvii. 24.)

Should the roaring lion prowl around our tents, seeking whom he may devour; (1 Pet. v. 8.) the Prince of Peace, the Captain of our Salvation, holds him by the power of his might, and assigns him the limits beyond which he cannot pass.

Let us hide ourselves only in the wounds of Christ. (Exod. xxxiii. 22.) In this strong tower we are safe, and may well rejoice. (Prov. xviii. 10.)

VIII.

THE WEAPONS AND THE VICTORY OF CHRIST.

THE weapons with which our Lord achieved the victory, were the Word of God—"It is written"—and Satan was overcome, his purpose was frustrated.

The Bible is the arsenal of the heroes of God, the spiritual armoury, whose walls are thickly studded with shields and coats of mail, and rich with swords and glittering spears. Whoever has triumphed in the spiritual conflict, equipped himself here. Hence were taken the sling-stones, which felled the Goliaths to the ground.

He that has access to this spiritual armoury is powerful in the camp.

Of these weapons Satan is afraid, and it has been his unremitting endeavour, either to despoil or conceal the word of God, or to destroy its effects.

To what expedients has not this cunning sophist resorted; what has he not brought forward and industriously circulated, to throw suspicion on the word or render it ambiguous, and thus to rob men of the pure unadulterated Scriptures of truth!

What false assertions has he not made under the high-sounding title of exposition, to impugn the

authenticity and genuineness of the Bible! There is not a single book in the Scriptures, the authority of which this malicious fiend has not attempted to shake, not a miracle which he has not stamped as a fable, not a promise which he has not endeavoured to weaken and nullify.

And he is still always employed, either through his instruments and servants, false prophets, professors, and others; or in his own person, by his immediate influence—ever is he doing his utmost to bring into question the purity of the word of God; for this word is his stumbling-block. But spurn him with abhorrence, turn your back upon him whenever he opens his accursed mouth, for he is a murderer of souls, and has been so from the beginning, a liar, and the father of lies. (John viii. 44.)

But *in what way, you ask, can the word of God afford such important service in the hour of temptation?* I will inform you.

Whenever the devil would lead us astray, his first and chief concern is to confuse our ideas. That which is perverted he sets before us as right, that which is human as divine, and evil he calls good, and good evil. Truth he represents as falsehood, and falsehood as truth. And when he has so deceived and dazzled us, we become subservient to his will, perhaps, when we think that we are doing what is right.

But these villanous spells and deceptions can profit him little, when we rest in faith on the word of God, which then secures us from deception and misapprehension. For it declares to us most distinctly what is right and wrong, true and false; what, under

all circumstances we should do, or think, or say, in accordance with the will of God. Examples will illustrate my meaning.

Satan would mar the labour of a preacher of the Gospel, and weaken its effect. He sets about his design with subtlety. He suggests to him that he should preach a little more smoothly, that he should not make the way so narrow, nor the gate so strait—and thus he may gain the friendship of the whole congregation. Yes, and many whom he has now only made refractory, he may then easily win to the truth.

When once this pleasing commencement has been made, the wicked one knows well how to back his counsels.

Does the preacher now take this matter into consideration, and has he no other shield than his own good thoughts, then is he soon ensnared. The propositions of the devil appear most reasonable and good, for Satan is wiser than he.

But let him rest by faith on the word of God, and believingly reply, "It is written," 'Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life.' (Matt. vii. 14.) "It is written," 'Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.' (Gal. i. 8.) What can the devil do now? This confidence in the word of God, this faith, is to him as the fire of artillery, which he cannot sustain—it compels him to retreat.

Take another example. *Satan would have you believe, that the religion of Jesus is not the only way of salvation.* And how does he go to work? With consummate skill. He carries you in spirit to a high

place, and shows you the millions of souls who, both in the Christian and heathen world, live without Christ; and thus he begins his discourse: "Tell me, shall *all these* be lost? To such a supposition neither your reason nor your heart will assent. But they do not believe in Christ, at least, as you and persons of your stamp believe in him. Can Christ then really be the *only* way of salvation? Can that which you call the new birth, be necessary, without any limitation, for the salvation of mankind? Have you not then been accustomed to entertain too contracted, too confined views respecting salvation?"

Thus doth he speak. Are you, with your reason, alone upon the battle-field, you cannot escape from this snare. His illusions will prove successful, he will assuredly triumph over you; the ground on which you stand will easily be made to rock beneath your feet.

But if you can wield the weapons of heavenly temper, if you can boldly oppose to the evil one the word of God, and in faith say to him, "It is written," 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' (John iii. 3.)—"It is written," 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the Father, but by me'—"It is written," 'few there be that find this way,' (Matt. vii. 14.) 'few are chosen.' (Matt. xx. 16.)—If you can believingly hold fast by these divine declarations, then is the devil stricken to the ground, his net is broken; he will desist from his endeavour to persuade you that Christ is not the only ground of salvation. His remaining hope then, is to

throw suspicion upon the word itself, on which you rely.

Again, *Satan would draw you back to the world.* And what is his method of proceeding? He gently approaches you, and insinuates that it is not right to seclude yourself from the world, and apparently desire to shun so completely the society of others, it does not well accord with the brotherly love which should obtain among Christians. You must sometimes repair to worldly circles, to let your light shine there, and men will see that the religion of Christ by no means converts its possessors into morose monks and hermits, but makes them cheerful, that they may thus win men to Christ. Yes, and for your own sake also, to exercise and confirm yourself in holiness, you must not withdraw altogether from the world, for to be holy where there are no solicitations to sin is an easy matter; but to walk in the sight of the wicked, and to refuse compliance with their evil courses, this is indeed to be righteous.

So doth the subtle one reason, and it pleaseth the old man well. (Eph. iv. 22 ; Col. iii. 9.)

Do you venture to dispute with him, you are not his equal; he will soon bring you under, and gain the field. For no doctor or professor is more skilled in disputation than he. He can make the most absurd things appear to be plausible and excellent.

But should you be able, meet him in faith with the word of God; should you, for instance, in such a case, say, "It is written," "Love not the world." (1 John ii. 15.) then can he do no more. You have cut off the hands of Dagon. (1 Sam. v. 4.)

Thus is the word of God, when grasped and wielded in faith, the all-powerful sword of the Spirit, by which we may subdue the wicked one. (Eph. vi. 17.)

“Yes, the ten commandments” says one, “if written in our heart, and we give utterance to them against him, will speedily repel him.” They are like the clubs of Sampson, tenfold, or ten swords of Michael against the roaring lion.

How then did the Lord obtain the victory? Satan counselled him to command that the stones should be made bread, and that thus, by an act of his own power, he might appease his hunger. This was a cunning and ensnaring device, as he well knew.

There were (to speak after the manner of men) many things which tended to move the Lord Jesus to consent to this advice, and in that case, as we have remarked, the work of redemption would at once have been destroyed. But he hearkened not to the suggestion. He left the stones to remain stones, and continued to hunger.

What did Jesus make use of in delivering himself from the snares which were laid for him? It was the word of God. On that word his eye rested. It is written, in the eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, and the third verse, “Man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.” This he grasped in faith, and opposed to the tempter. And in this promise he found abundant ground of confidence.

Better to suffer hunger forty days and nights more, and even longer, than by a distrustful act of power of his own to forestall the aid of the Father. God can

sustain me without bread, he has led me into the wilderness, I hope in him. This was his thought—in truth, an impenetrable breast-plate.

The devil was now obliged to devise other projects. The hope he had entertained to persuade Jesus to an act of compliance, that he might avoid the sufferings connected with the atonement for the transgression of Adam, had now at once and for ever vanished. For Jesus believed the declaration of the word, that God could, even in the bitterest season of want, without bread feed him, and without water give him drink, and, through the bare word of his mouth, could support and maintain him. Against this faith must all the darts of the devil be shivered, as against an iron bulwark.

The words with which Jesus prevailed are written, as it has been said, in the book of Deuteronomy, Moses spake them to the children of Israel, on the borders of the pleasant land, when he recalled to their minds the faithfulness and truth with which God had led them for forty years through the wilderness. "And thou shalt remember," he said, "all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know, that he might make thee know, that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord, doth man live." (viii. 23.)

Yes, the Lord needs not the mill or the oven for the

supply of his children ; he can rain upon them bread from heaven, as he did in the wilderness. He can give it them in the night, when the little ones are at rest.

He did so at Cherith, (1 Kings xvii. 5.) he did so at Zarephath, (1 Kings xvii. 9.) by means of a widow-woman, and in many other places. It is a small thing to him.

It is not the bread we eat, for the support of our bodies, that is essential to our life, but it is that spiritual food which his word, his will, and his blessing, supply through the outward means. It is only when God wills that bread can nourish us ; otherwise it is of no benefit, we are poor and weak in the midst of abundance.

Since, therefore, the quality of sustaining life does not belong to the bread, but depends on the will of God alone, we can easily understand how, with five loaves and two fishes, Jesus could feed and satisfy five thousand men ; (Matt. xiv. 17—21.) and, with a cake of barley bread, could give his servant strength for forty days and forty nights ; (1 Kings. xix. 8.) yea, how he supports so many poor families.

The Lord needs not any bread to sustain us when it pleases him. His word only is enough, and we live. Without bread did Moses subsist on Sinai, and Jesus in the wilderness, and so have many, many others.

It needs but his word, and the air which we breathe is changed into milk, and wine, and we eat the richest fare, and drink only strength and refreshment, without opening the lips—without sitting at table, or moving the hand. This is meant by the expression—

“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

In times of persecution thousands of the children of God have experienced this, in its literal sense; the believing poor continually do so, and it is true—as true as that the living God dwelleth in heaven.

Let all of us, therefore, who suffer need, lay hold of this truth, that it may preserve us from fear and discouragement, and that it may protect us against the assaults of the wicked one.

It has pleased God, in his providence, to reduce many among us to great necessity. They have begun to suffer want in every thing—in labour and its recompense, and perhaps also in prospect and credit. They are deep in the wilderness among the stoues, and there is sighing among them by night and by day. Steal and defraud they will not; God will graciously preserve them from such crimes.

But Satan would obtain much advantage, if the thought only gained place in your breasts—“God has forsaken us; now must we see, how we can provide for ourselves?” Satan would be well pleased if you only yielded to the distrustful care and anxiety—“What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed?” or if you adopted the notion that God has given you a sign, by the necessity which presses upon you, that you may endeavour to free yourselves from distress, by having recourse to some venturous speculation, or by the chances of play, or by some artifice, or any other improper means. Yes, then would the tempter have already succeeded well.

Brethren, though much embarrassed, permit not to the adversary such a triumph. Meet him with the weapons which your Master bore against him, and which thus, as by special consecration, have acquired holiness and strength ; and say in faith, "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

This is the word of him that is faithful and true. Hold fast this word, build thereon, and wait—wait only a little in the wilderness. He will never leave you nor forsake you. (Jos. i. 5 ; Heb. xiii. 5.)

There are some, I could mention them by name, who have been in greater straits than you. They have believed that word with unshaken confidence. Whenever the wicked one has harassed them with his cursed counsels, they have, in this faith, with resolution and firmness, repelled him, and trusted in the Lord. Now is their mouth filled with laughter, and their tongue with singing. The Lord hath done great things for them, whereof they are glad. (Ps. cxxvi. 2, 3.) They would not exchange for mountains of gold and silver the experience which they then acquired in the wilderness. They have seen the glory of the Lord, and have themselves become living witnesses that "man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

"If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." So said the tempter. He required that Jesus should give proof of his Sonship. But our Lord chose rather to leave this demonstration to the Father.

O, my brethren, may it in every case be the same

with you. God will make it manifest that you are his children, not, perhaps, by causing you to live in houses of affluence, but by enabling you with confidence and joy to sing praises among the stones and juniper-trees in the wilderness, and supporting you by the word which proceedeth out of his mouth.

IX.

THE SECOND TEMPTATION.

THE first temptation of our Lord was a total failure. Whether Jesus were the Son of God, Satan could not yet decide; and if he were so, the tempter had not succeeded in moving him a finger-breadth from his mediatorial path.

The devil makes preparation for a second assault. "He taketh him up into the holy city, and sitteth him on a pinnacle of the temple." Perhaps only in vision? No, corporeally, as the scriptural account compels us to believe.

Our Lord was borne through the air in a moment, by supernatural power, and conveyed to the holy city, and then hurried with the swiftness of lightning upwards to the flat roof of one of the projecting wings of the temple, on the declivity of the mountain. The same power with which "the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip" from the desert of Gaza, was here granted to the evil spirit for the occasion. (Acts viii. 39.)

As an eagle with his prey, so fled the prince of darkness with the Lord of Glory. This was awfully terrible; but Jesus was willing to endure the most horrible, and encounter the most fearful things, that he might drink for us, to the dregs, the cup of trembling, and

leave nothing of our ransom unpaid, even to the uttermost farthing.

He was willing to be the sport of the evil spirit in his accursed hands, that the angels of God might bear us sinners in the arms of tenderness to Abraham's bosom.

Did our Lord know that it was the angel of darkness with whom he had to do? I think not. It appears to have been hidden from him by the sacred counsel of God, that the temptation might be the more severe, and the victory the greater and more glorious.

Behold our Saviour now, upon the pinnacle of the temple, with Satan at his side. A giddy abyss is beneath their feet. Deep under them lies the city; yet deeper in the valley, as a little streak, flows with rapid course the brook of Kidron.

Satan assumes the mien and aspect of the best intentioned friend, who, if Jesus were indeed the Son of God, had with him one and the same purpose, and desired nothing so earnestly as that the work of redemption should be speedily accomplished.

He points down to the fearful abyss, and says unto Jesus, "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down." Perhaps he added still more, "Behold, I earnestly desire to know whether thou art the Son of God; I await only for the certainty, to bow my knee immediately, and pay my homage. I am not the only one who, with intense eagerness, awaits the unveiling of thy person and glory. Thou shalt be a king and ruler over a great people as soon as it shall please thee to unfold thy kingly majesty and power. See, here is an opportunity, cast thyself down from this eminence. This miracle will astonish the world;

no more doubt will then be entertained as to thy Godhead, and every knee shall be bent in the dust. Thou shalt be as God. And not others only will be convinced, but thyself also wilt arrive at perfect certainty that thou art the Messiah, and that God has not forsaken thee, as he appears to have done since the commencement of thy suffering from hunger in the wilderness."

Something of this kind might the devil represent to him; and with the more certainty, to attain his purpose, he quotes that blessed promise in the ninety-first Psalm, "He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone."

The plan is well conceived, and the trial severe. Yes, the seducer appears to be an angel of light, and his counsel good, and well suited for the purpose.

Behold, then, our Lord upon the fearful summit of the temple. How will he act? One step forwards and he treads the air—the angels bear him gently to the ground; the people cry aloud, "Hosannah!" he is the object of their wonder, astonishment, and worship—but shipwreck is made of the work of our redemption for ever; for the Priest has then forsaken the path of poverty and abstinence—the Mediator has acted in opposition to the plan and counsel of God—the Lamb is not without blemish—it is polluted with sin, it is unfit to be presented as the offering of atonement.

O moment big with the destiny of a world! Yet, thanks be to God, Jesus detected the deep artifice. He well knew, indeed, that the angels would bear him up. But should he, therefore, call in question the

faithfulness and power of God? No, no; never. His holy soul shrunk back from the snare which Satan had laid for him.

One word of the Bible suffices to discomfit the wicked one. A second brings him to a stand, to shield and spear—"It is written again, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." The command is uttered. The Lord hath said it; and the devil is again smitten to the ground.

X.

SPIRITUAL HEIGHTS.

THE holy city, the spiritual Jerusalem, is ever the scene of Satan's subtlety and most cunning assaults. It is also the field of his most splendid conquests. O, may it soon be otherwise!

Temptations are always at hand, and men are even now, through the devices of Satan, placed in circumstances, as to spiritual things, which greatly resemble the trial of our Lord on the pinnacle of the temple. These are spiritual heights.

The best and most happy condition upon earth is unquestionably this, to abide, 'as a worm,' at the feet of Jesus, poor in spirit; with Lazarus to lie at the rich man's door; and with the woman of Canaan to desire, as a dog, only the crumbs that fall from the Master's table.

And it is well to be thus, for then shall we become rich. Here alone are we secure. No wonder then that the wicked one is intent on nothing more eagerly than to entice the children of God from this state of humility and spiritual poverty. And many are the devices to which he has recourse to effect his

purpose. Let me place before you one or two of them.

Clothed as an angel of light, he comes to you, and carries you into the holy city, that is, *he sets before your spiritual vision all the gifts, and graces, and privileges*, of which you may become partakers in the kingdom of heaven, so that you imagine it is a holy angel who enables you to see these glorious sights.

And now the enemy brings forward one of these gifts; for example, *that of the Holy Ghost*, and begins to explain to you all that you may gain by this gift; how the Holy Ghost will sanctify (Rom. xv. 16.) and enlighten you; (John xvi. 14.) how he will guide you into all truth; (John xvi. 13.) reveal unto you the deep things of God; (1 John ii. 27.) will lead and move you; (Rom. viii. 14.) will speak and witness within you; (1 John v. 6.) and so on, in accordance with that which is written.

But the devil proceeds farther, and seeks to persuade you that the Spirit will reveal new things unto you, which the Bible only incidentally or partially contains, or perhaps not at all. He goes farther, and teaches you to regard your own thoughts as those which are suggested by the Spirit; and yet still farther, and declares that you are inspired, one who has no more need for the outer light from the letter, since you have such inward illumination; and, alas! before you are aware, you are transported to the pinnacle of the temple.

You feel yourself exalted on high, above the word and the testimony of God, above the church and ministry of the gospel; you behold all these things, together with the whole of Jerusalem, all other believers lying deep at your feet; and if you are not seized with

dizziness on this painful elevation, and finish your course in the horrible abyss of madness, it is to the unbounded grace of God alone that you are beholden for your preservation.

And such wiles as these have before now succeeded in ensnaring the souls of some, who would no longer conform to any prescribed order, or permit themselves to be ruled by the word of God, conceiving that they were led by the Spirit, which had testified to them of higher and better things. Truly, there may have been those among them, who were in reality pious men, and who would again be recovered to the right path, but still it is a melancholy and distressing misconception. May God preserve us from such illusions.

But to proceed, "It is written"—"Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." (Gal. i. 8, 9.) "It is written"—"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." (Psalm cxix. 105.) Such an appeal to the word of God puts to flight the wicked one.

If Satan gains not his point in one way, he tries another, and he does not desist till he has had recourse to all his expedients.

We see many standing on the pinnacle of the temple, and various are the means by which they have been transported thither.

One indulges the pleasing fancy, that he understands all mysteries, that he is gifted with a spiritual illumination beyond others, that he carries about him the keys of

David. The devil has made a prey of him through the abundance of *his knowledge*, and with wicked enchantment has persuaded him to believe that he hath the anointing and knoweth all things. (1 John ii. 27.)

Another regards himself as the man who, with the sword of his mouth, shall slay the wicked, who, with the sceptre of his word, shall sway the minds of men, and after whom no one dares to speak. His *ability in teaching and preaching* has become, by the subtlety of the wicked one, a trap and a snare.

A third arrogates to himself the proud pre-eminence of being, with reference to God, far apart from others, as if he sat on a seat in the kingdom of Christ twice as high as other poor sinners. Perhaps it was the *gift of prayer* he possessed, from which the enemy prepared him the sweet poison.

In a fourth the notion has firmly fixed itself, that without him the kingdom of God cannot stand. He is a pillar without his equal on earth; an apostle, an Elijah of his day. *The blessing which God granted to his word and testimony*, has been made, through the artifice of the devil, into a lime-twig, on which he has been caught.

The dreams and chimeras of a fifth has Satan magnified into *pure visions and manifestations from heaven*. Now the poor creature deems himself a seer and a prophet.

Before the eyes of a sixth the devil holds his magic mirror, in which the weak mortal *sees himself with a halo of glory round his head*; or the deceiver sends to him friends, who represent that his meekness and patience, his faith or his love, must be extolled and admired, and even idolized by men; and then the poor

deluded soul enters into the full persuasion that God most certainly intends to set him forth as an example of holiness.

Behold, these are the heights, the pinnacles of the temple, to which Satan conducts men.

And the evil does not stop here ; for let the deceived souls but once stand upon these heights, and imagine themselves apostles, saints, and prophets, then they sometimes step higher. It is not all of them who come down again without having first sustained injury. Alas ! some fall from these heights down into the depths of mental aberration.

Of such unhappy ones, who at length have supposed themselves to be God, or Christ, or the Holy Ghost, every age has afforded instances, and that even in the midst of the holy city.

Brethren, abide in your strong tower, and lie in the dust ; above all, those of you who are rich in gifts, and apt to teach ; those who are held in reputation among the brethren, and who publicly instruct in the congregation ; those of you who lead the assembly of the pious, and whose light shines with especial splendour in Zion. Such things readily present to the dragon that which he can seize, and by which he can rapidly transport you to the heights.

Gird as a breast-plate on your bosom the words of Christ, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. v. 3.)

Place as a helmet on your head that truth, "Who-soever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." (Mark x. 15.)

Take as a sword in your hand that word, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the lowly." (James iv. 6.)

And never forget that the golden rose of Jesus does not bloom upon the heights, but in the deep vallies.

And should the devil urge you into a presumptuous and perplexing speculation with regard to the unsearchable mysteries of God, should he hurry you into vain and profitless investigations, respecting the Trinity, or eternity, or the two natures of Christ, or whatever else it may be of this description ; now collect all your powers, and cry aloud to him, " It is written," ' We know in part, and we prophecy in part ; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.' (1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10.) Declare to him, in the name of Jesus, that you desire to know nothing more than that which is necessary for your salvation, and thus you will drive him away.

XI.

“ IF THOU BE THE SON OF GOD, CAST THYSELF DOWN.”

THAT the devil eagerly makes use of our relation to God, to move us the more readily to all kinds of wicked compliances, is an acknowledged truth.

Has Satan learned, for instance, that *you have yet a sin that is dear to you, and which has not been renounced and overcome*; he brings you into circumstances which not only supply incentives to that sin, but also the opportunity of indulging it. Then you stand on the brink of a precipice. “Cast thyself down,” whispers the devil, “thou shalt escape.” You hesitate. He adds, “it is so pleasant below.” You are still reluctant. “Cast thyself down,” he cries yet louder. You tremble at the danger, and yet cannot withdraw from the spot, and are as one enchanted. “Cast thyself down,” proceeds the wicked one: “thou art a child of God; thou canst again find grace.” He so speaks, and if God do not hold you back, the leap is taken.

You are by nature of an irascible disposition. Some one in your household disturbs you. You are greatly stirred up to yield to anger and revenge, but you know

not whether you dare. You are on the edge of a pit. “Cast thyself down,” cries the devil, “Thou art a child of God, and between the children of God and the world there should be no peace, but a sword and division. (Matt. x. 34.) Give scope to thy passions.” Thus he counsels, and before he has spoken, you are boiling, perhaps, with wrath, and heaping sin upon sin.

You are in great straits, and are weary of life. The devil sets you upon the top of your house, or upon the edge of a cliff, or on the shore of the deep sea. O, how dreadful is your position! “Cast thyself down,” whispers the evil one. You are inclined to do so, yet you shrink from such a plunge. “Why dost thou linger?” cries the tempter. “‘Cast thyself down.’ In the arms of death there is sweet repose, and all suffering will cease. ‘Cast thyself down.’ Thou standest by grace, and grace never is lost, even though the mountains should depart and the hills be removed. (Isa. liv. 10.) ‘Cast thyself down.’ Hasten to thy home.” Thus the serpent.—O frightful! you waver—you cast your eyes downward: the desire is great, the impulse strong, the means before you; and O! if the hand of divine mercy do not interpose to save you, you rush into eternity.

Satan tempted the Lord Jesus, that he might, in a way not approved of God, namely, by a voluntary leap from the pinnacle of the temple, give evidence that he was the Son of God. And thus also does he draw near to believers.

Doubts are entertained as to your state of grace. He whispers to you, “Men hesitate to reckon you one of the children of the kingdom. Prove to them what you

are." Now it is high time to wield the sword of the Spirit against the tempter, to meet him with the word, "The Lord knoweth them that are his;" (2 Tim. ii. 19.) and to let that suffice.

But in such circumstances some fall into grievous errors.

One is guilty of *shameful falsehood*, inasmuch as he boasts of spiritual experiences which he has not really attained.

Another yields to *criminal impulses*, since he speaks of frames of mind, in his own case, which God alone can produce, and which he does not possess.

This man acts with *scandalous dissimulation*, whilst he hypocritically arrogates to himself the anointing which has not yet been granted him, even for a moment.

That man is stained with *black impurity*, because he endeavours to make men believe that the works which he has done by his own act have been wrought in him by the Spirit of God.

And what abominations can be greater in the eyes of God than these?

Well may the devil insultingly laugh, when he succeeds in casting the children of God into such a sink as this.

"Cast thyself down," said Satan, and would add *the reason*, viz. that thereby he might carry forward the purposes and the counsel of God. And earnestly did he desire to excite in the mind of Jesus any degree of impatience as to the slow progress of his work of redemption.

And O! *how gladly would he stir up in believers the motions of impatience*; how eagerly does he spur them on to self-imposed exercises, in order to perfect their holiness, and urge them to endeavour, by rapid strides, to mount to the highest step of the ladder in the attainment of their individual glory. With what importunity does he call to them to "leap down and choose the shortest way;" for the base deceiver is well aware that such a hurrying forwards is only a falling back, since it is a turning away from the throne of grace and the blood of the Lamb, and he knows that in such ways, of our own choosing, no angels will bear us in their hands, but that we shall only dash our feet against the stones, and that we shall fall into darkness, pride, and self-sufficiency.

Are they witnesses and ministers of the word whom he thus deceives? O, how doth he rejoice *when they think the time long till God shall crown their labours*, and how sedulously doth he cherish this impatience in their souls, and with what delight doth he cry, "Cast thyself down from the pinnacle of the temple." And with what exultation doth he look on when they obey his voice, and endeavour, with their own wild-fire, to kindle the desires of the congregation, and with fleshly tumult to excite the people, so to speak, to take the kingdom of heaven by storm, and whilst God doth it not, to gird themselves, to anoint and equip themselves for the war.

This is a day of rejoicing to the devil, for he knows that now at least he has succeeded, and that under such dark and earthly impulses the Holy Ghost will not make himself known.

Those by whom the Lord will execute his purposes of mercy are broken instruments, and are submissive to the will of their God, and are cheerfully led and directed by the Saviour. And this is as it should be. Violence and precipitation can effect nothing in this great work.

XII.

SATAN ARMED WITH THE WORD OF GOD.

“ IF thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down.”
So spake the devil to Jesus—a most difficult task.

But the children of God have dared to attempt deeds of greater peril. Peter ventured, notwithstanding its rage, to walk upon the stormy sea; (Matt. xiv. 29.) and the three children recorded in Daniel, encountered the burning fiery furnace; and they suffered no injury. (Dan. iii. 27.)

In all things is it given in command to the angels of God, to bear us up in their hands. They are attached to us, as a body-guard and safe-conduct, on whose guidance and protection, in all the way in which God has commanded us to go, it is our privilege joyfully to reckon.

Relying on that promise, Jesus might have cast himself from the pinnacle of the temple; but he did it not. And why? Because God had not expressly directed him. Scarcely was the satanic suggestion made, when probably the divine promise presented itself to the soul of Jesus. “ No, thought the pure Lamb, for such self-chosen way is the promise not given,” and if Satan said,

“The Lord will give his angels charge concerning thee,” our Lord repelled him with weapons taken out of the heavenly armoury of the word ; “ Jesus said unto him, it is written, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God ;” and again was Satan vanquished.

But what is meant by tempting God? It is that which we have described, namely, *voluntarily to go into danger, that God may deliver us.*

To such unworthy courses would the devil endeavour to lead us, and for this purpose he has committed to memory the most striking promises of God, that he may take us by surprise. Therefore, when some word of God is presented to us, to induce us to take some daring step, let us ask, whether this word is suited to our case, and whether we also have a warrant to rest upon it in such circumstances. Thus it will become clear, who has presented to us the word, and Satan will not so easily seduce us.

If a man comes to you, and says, “Steer out into those furious breakers, and rescue a brother out of the surge, for it is written, ‘ When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee ; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee.’ ” (Isa. xliii. 2.) If he says to you, “ Go into that house on fire, and snatch that screaming child out of the flames, for God has said, ‘ When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned ; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.’ ” (Isa. xliii. 2.) Do you hear a voice within you, saying, “ Give to that poor hungry soul your last penny, for it is written, ‘ Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.’ ” (Matt. xxv. 40.) Then, my friend,

gird yourself in the name of God, and do so. A good angel speaks to you, and you may reasonably expect all help.

But should another approach you, and say, "Come, friend, into this or that gay society, for it is written, 'He will keep the feet of his saints.'" (1 Sam. ii. 9.) Is it said to you, "only go—venture it once—take delight in it, without any care as to the consequences, for it is written, 'he giveth to his beloved sleeping.'" (Ps. cxxvii. 2. German version.) Then know that it is a crafty devil, with whom you have to do; and answer him, "It is written, again, 'thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.'"

There are many snares of the devil, such as these, taken from the word of God. To this class belongs that accursed temptation, by which *he entices us to make trial of this or that divine declaration, whether it holds good*, and thus to bring under examination, as it were, the faithfulness and truth of the Lord.

So once, for example, did a villanous device of his succeed with three ministers of the word. He placed before their eyes, the eighteenth chapter of Matthew and twentieth verse, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them;" and then, that other passage in the preceding verse, "Again, I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven;" and then he asked, "Is it indeed so?" "Ah," thought the preachers, "we will put it to the test;" and they appointed an hour for the purpose of praying that the Lord would personally appear. And they

came together and prayed, "O Lord, manifest thyself, Lord appear among us;" but he did not appear, and the devil cried out "victory!" His malicious design succeeded. Afterwards the Lord did indeed appear to them, but in a very different manner from that which they had expected. He became unto them as a moth, and as a worm, (see Hos. v. 12. marginal reading,) and to the end of their lives they received no more light, nor joy, nor peace, and a spiritual decline took place, which they could not avert.

May God in mercy preserve us from such attempts to prove his faithfulness and truth!

Let the least inclination of the kind, that moves within us, be a token, that we are in an evil case, and let us cry as loud and earnestly as we can, "It is written, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

One of the common devices of Satan is, *to shake, if possible, our confidence in the word of God by means of the word itself.* Wonderful are the things which we live to behold!

He sets before us, at a glance, a multitude of unimportant things from the Bible. As that Paul wrote to Timothy, desiring him to bring the cloak, which he left at Troas, (2 Tim. iv. 13.) and many other circumstances equally trivial. And whilst he is holding them before our view, he asks us, with malicious purpose, "Are *these words* also inserted by the Spirit?" And then immediately afterwards, "Is not then *the whole* of the Bible inspired?" And he proceeds further, "What is from the Spirit, and what is not?" And then his conclusion—"The Bible is an unsafe foundation. And indeed occasionally, by such jugglers' artifices, he causes, for a moment at least, the whole

Bible-edifice to fall upon our heads, so that all is uncertain and wavering for a time, till at last we recover our recollection.

For the purpose of rendering suspected the word of God, he not unfrequently makes *a passage of Scripture stand prominently before our eyes, when something occurs in our life, which that word seems to falsify.*

Are you lying, for example, almost in despair, in great need and bitter trial, and help is as yet afar off? it is probably that word, which he recalls to your memory, "Like as a Father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him;" (Ps. ciii. 13.) and then with a fiendish grin, he asks, "Where then is the Father, where is his pity, and why tarries this boasted help?" And what would please the wicked one better, than to pollute your soul with distrust, impatience, and unbelief?

When for a long time you have been entreating some mercy, and wrestling with God, be it for bread for your hungry children, for counsel under some pressing embarrassment, or for some alleviation of your pain, or a little comfort in the cup of your anxiety, *and you do not receive it*—Satan is again near. "Behold," says he, "is it not written," "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son?" (John xiv. 13.) Now, pious worshipper, is your lap already full of the gifts of God?" So mocks the accursed one, and truly, if the Lord hold not his hand over your faith, you cannot escape these fiery darts unwounded.

The most dangerous method in which the devil uses the word of God as a weapon against us, is this—*He dissevers single passages of Scripture from their connec-*

tion, and instead of interpreting them according to the rule of faith, he presents them apart by themselves, perverts their meaning, and endeavours to show them to us in the same light. Here, certainly, if any where, it is important to encounter him with the weapons of the word, to enter with the sword of the Spirit into the conflict.

"It is written," he says, "'Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound;' (Rom. v. 20.) therefore, let loose the reins, you have full liberty." Say to him in reply, "It is written again, 'Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid! How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?'" (Rom. vi. 1, 2.)

"But," cries the devil, "It is written, 'It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me;' (Rom. vii. 17.) therefore, compose yourself, and be not so distressed about your faults." Say to him in reply, "It is also written," 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' (Rom. vii. 24.) The children of God mourn over their sins."

"It is written," rejoins Satan, "'that it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God, that sheweth mercy;' (Rom. ix. 16.) therefore, remain in the world and in the enjoyment of pleasure, till God call you." Let your answer be, "I know it, but 'it is written again,' 'work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.'" (Phil. ii. 12.)

The devil is not backward with a rejoinder—"It is written," 'known unto God are all his works from the

beginning of the world,' (Acts xv. 18.) therefore, desist from your supplications and prayers, your portion is assigned you; whatever has been decreed to you, you shall certainly receive." Give him this reply, "It is written again, 'Ask and ye shall receive, for every one that asketh, receiveth.'" (Luke xi. 9, 10.)

"But," says the dragon, "It is written," 'this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.' (John vi. 39.) Live then as you like, and do whatsoever your heart desires. What have you to do with Moses and his laws? Your salvation is secured for eternity." Thus cry to him, in reply, "It is written again," 'My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.'" (John x. 27.)

Behold, my brother, thus shouldest thou disarm the devil, and in the strength of thy God triumph over him, and make a shew of him openly.

XIII.

THE MAGIC VISION.

THE scene of action is changed. With the rapidity of lightning was the Son of God hurried from the pinnacle of the temple, and borne by magic power to the summit of an exceeding high mountain. (ver. 8.) Then did he, in mental vision, behold himself placed, as it were, on the highest elevation of a lofty tower, and a boundless prospect, filled with every charm and dazzling beauty lay extended before his eyes in the mirror of a wondrous manifestation. And what followed ?

In a moment stand forth, within the circle of vision, in brilliant relief, all the kingdoms of the world, with all their glory, delights, and embellishments, in all their alluring forms. Time and space have no longer any limits. That which is distant draws nigh ; that which was closed opens itself wide ; that which was veiled is exposed to view ; and yet it was, as Luke says, (Luke iv. 5,) *in a moment of time*—an unheard of delusion of the senses !

In this splendid picture, as it is probable, lay the most lovely regions of the earth spread out before him, and around him the most charming prospect of mag-

nificent cities and gorgeous palaces—On this side haughty Rome, the victorious mistress of the world, and the ruler over a hundred kings; on the other side the spicy groves of the east, and the lovely rose-gardens of Persia—Here Ophir, with its rich mines of gold and of diamonds; there India, that land of wonders, abounding with the varied charms of an unfading spring, and flowing with milk and honey.

But not kingdoms merely and cities—yet other things presented themselves to the view of Jesus.

The devil showed him, besides the kingdoms of the world, also their glory.

Whatever this world possesses that is attractive and alluring, whatever delights the senses and commands admiration, and whatever the children of the world call their paradise and their heaven, at once did he behold spread before him—Here towering castles and pleasant villas, with their lawns and gardens; there chariots and horses, princely trains and equipages—On one spot, galleries of the fine arts and temples of wisdom; on another, monuments of fame and laurel-crowns of honour—Yonder, courtly society in golden chambers; nearer at hand the festive throng, amid the alluring tones and seductive power of symphony and song. In short, all that makes the heart leap within the children of this world, and suffuses the cheek, and causes the eyes to glisten with joy and delight, passed then before the view of Jesus—a picture that fixed and rivetted the attention; and no exhibition calculated to please and excite the feelings would Satan at that time conceal from his sight.

Something similar to this do we also at times experience. Those, namely, among our brethren who pos-

sess by nature a lively temperament, an easily excited mind, and a strong imagination, can no doubt speak of such magic visions. Such persons the devil is wont especially to approach with snares like these, since even their susceptible nature itself, and their quick sensibilities, appear to him already to promise a certain victory; at least, he the more easily succeeds in carrying persons of this description to the summit of his magic mountain.

For the purpose of effecting this, the tempter generally makes use of outward means. Such means he finds, for example, in the kingdom of the fine arts, in so far as they are made subservient to the world and to sin. At one time he makes use of an exquisite painting or beautiful poem; at another, of sweet and harmonious tones or moving melody, in the midst of which he carries on his enchantments.

So, for instance, is there often need only of some chord, or single tone of a flute, to be wafted in tender undulations from afar into the solitude of our quiet chamber, where it is scarcely audible, and his magic has already begun. As by the creating word of the Almighty, Satan produces in an instant before our view a paradise full of intoxicating joys, and the obstructing veil, as it were, being removed, the eye roams abroad through an earthly elysium.

The joys of our youth, of which we long had taken leave, present themselves before us in the most attractive form; and earthly pleasures which, perhaps, years ago we had crucified and slain, appear to us again in the most seductive shape and colouring. Here hang crowns of perishable honour, but how highly do we value them. There opens to our view the

tumultuous assembly of worldly society and frivolous intercourse ; but how many charms does this circle again present to us ? The poor soul finds itself powerfully drawn back.

Now open to our view the splendid halls of the great, filled with sound and song, with stringed instruments and the votaries of pleasure, reeling in the dance. And again, the eye rolls over the deceitful rose-beds of human art and sweet poetry.

In a word, all things that are beautiful and precious which the world can offer, high in dignity and attractive in grace, as by a stroke of enchantment, stand forth in living images and scenes in the mirror of our imagination ; and however vain in themselves, and worthless and pitiful, a magic spell is over them ; they are seen in beauteous colouring and adornment, and richest enamelling, as if we really looked into Paradise ; and an ocean of sensibility, and languishing, and desire begins in a moment, as we gaze at such a spectacle, to move and to heave within our souls, as if a storm were about to burst forth from their depths.

Behold ! it is at a moment like this that you are standing upon the high enchanted mountain, and the devil shows you all the kingdoms of the world and their glory *in a moment of time*.

And therefore it is, that the music of the present day, as it is now constituted, is so dangerous a thing, since the devil succeeds so easily in raising, by means of it, the most sinful of the passions.

In the operas and concerts of this world does Satan find a means of powerful enchantment, to make the vain glory of the world to outshine that of heaven.

Experienced Christians have acknowledged that, for

a moment at least, by means of such wicked and worldly music, they have been so irresistibly hurried along by the devil, as if under the influence of wine, that they have regretted their departure from Egypt, and have envied the children of this world, if not their scenes of rioting and intemperance, at least their higher and more refined pleasures.

Yes; not unfrequently is this most efficacious of all his artifices, one of the wings on which, by the power of the tempter, we are transported to the summit of that mountain whence the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them, pass before the eyes of our fancy in a sea of light and golden vapour, and so charm and captivate the senses, that the very elect would be deceived and led aside, were it not that with his favour doth the Lord compass them as with a shield. (Psalm v. 12.)

XIV.

THE DARING PROPOSAL OF THE WICKED ONE.

AT the very moment when the kingdoms of this world and their glory lay before the eyes of Jesus, in the glare and dazzling splendour of this wondrous vision, did Satan, laying aside his deceptive guise, make known himself, and say, "All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me." (Ver. 9.) St. Luke says, "All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them, for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will, I give it. If thou, therefore, wilt worship me, all shall be thine." (Luke iv. 6, 7.) He claims all as his own—what daring presumption!

And yet, alas! here hath the Father of lies spoken the truth. Through the sentence of a holy God the world for which the great High Priest doth not pray, has been made the portion of Satan. (John xvii. 9.) He is their prince, (John xii. 31; xiv. 30; xvi. 11.) their ruler, (Eph. vi. 12.) their Lord. (Isai. xxvi. 13. 1 Cor. viii. 5.) The great nations of the earth are his, and the great bulk of mankind bear his yoke. The inhabitants of this world pay him tribute, and on the walls of their cities float his sable banners. Who can number the countless millions whose souls he

holds in severest bondage, tied and bound with the chains of sin and darkness, and in spiritual prisons and cells, whether Mahometan or heathen, whether Jewish or papistical, whether those of self-sufficient rationalism or daring infidelity.

Yes, without any arrogant pretensions, was he able to say, all these are mine. For the few who are not his, those who are left as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, (Isai. i. 8.) the worm Jacob, (Isai. xli. 14.) the despised house of Israel, (Jer. xxxiii. 24.) all these are lost, as nothing among the giant-cities of the fallen prince of angels; they are as the drop in the unfathomable ocean.

And what is there in the world, which the devil has not seized and laid under contribution for the purpose of extending and strengthening his kingdom; what has he not made subservient to the furtherance of his wicked plans, especially in the present day? Has he not already in his service the liberal sciences, and their professors, the periodical press, associations, and assemblies in the great world? Have not all these been readily enlisted in his cause? Who has turned the stream of poetry into that flood of romance and drama, which overflows the world with its thousand falsehoods and ungodly imaginations? Who acts so powerful a part in the representation of opera, and in the wanton melodies in which the powers of tone, which ought to be employed in the praises of God, are perverted for the destruction of souls, and to pour into the heart the most subtle poison? Who has pitched his camp among the high-flown systems of new-fangled philosophy, and from these bulwarks and bastions hurled his javelins against the gospel of peace? Who has raked up and

and exposed to public gaze that grovelling system of the present day, that sweet and effeminate scheme of *Æsthetics*, a corrupt code opposed to the gospel of Christ, and which, as an intoxicating potion, drowns the souls of men in a fatal slumber, from which, it is to be feared, they will awake, alas ! only by the thunders of the judgment ? Is it not the father of lies, the old serpent, the dragon from the bottomless pit ?

And let no one be surprised that satan speaks of a gift which is actually in his own power—" All these things *will I give thee*, if thou wilt fall down and worship me."

There are favours conferred by the wicked one, as there are blessings from heaven, and the world swarms with those who are indebted to him for their enjoyments and honours, their titles and distinctions. Yes, he has his gold, and his rewards for those who thus follow his banners, and know that their zeal in his service will be repaid in many ways ; and not unfrequently does God permit these reprobate men so exceedingly to indulge in the pomps and pleasures of this wicked world, and they so feast and fatten in the rich pastures of fleshly enjoyments, that at length the last trace of man is lost in these vessels of wrath, and they go down like beasts into hell.

" All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." Thus spake the tempter to our Lord. That the Son of the living God should bow the knee in worship to the old serpent ! Oh, it is the most daring, the most frightful proposition that ever has been made. Indeed, it seems as if it were the advice of a maniac, utterly inconsistent with the craft, and subtlety, and unworthy the giant intellect of the

prince of darkness. But let any one examine the critical situation in which Satan was then placed, and his shameless accursed suggestion will cease to be a matter of surprise.

The mask is now laid aside, for the devil conjectures, with increasing assurance, who it is that stands before him. The glorious triumphs which, notwithstanding his most subtle devices, our Lord had already achieved over him, left him scarcely the shadow of a doubt that Jesus was the Christ.

Irritated to the utmost, by the failure of his plots against the great opposer of his kingdom, and moved no less by the danger which threatened his dominion over the souls of men, he meditated, in hatred and rage, a last and decisive stroke; but reflection was now chained by the power of passion, and all prudence and discretion were swallowed up in the fiery waves of distracting doubt, which rolled through his soul in wild and horrible confusion.

When he became certain as to the person of his antagonist, and not till then, did Satan perceive, in its full extent, the great and vital importance of the conflict; and it was not concealed from him that one or other of them *must* fall.

Nevertheless, his last attack, however great the skill and power which he had hitherto displayed, is the most ill contrived of all, and with the desperation and impetuosity of a warrior who has given up all as lost, he rushes blindly upon his adversary, and is transfixed by his sword.

This blow, which Satan now aimed against Jesus, was the last effort of desperation; by which we perceive, that relinquishing the endeavour to ensnare

the Son of God, and drive Him from the field, which was now evidently hopeless, he meant offensively to intimate, by a contemptuous blow, as it were, with the foot, that Jesus must not suppose He could compel all His enemies to bow their necks before Him.

With such desperate intentions, and foaming with fury, the devil began his magic jugglery, placed his enchanted mirror before the eyes of Christ, displayed to his view one sight after another of the most lovely regions of the earth, and their glory; and cried to him with grinning scorn and wild satanic derision, "Behold all these things: these delights and enjoyments shall be thine, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Away then, take the rich booty. Down in the dust, and do homage to thy Lord and Master."

The supposition may also be entertained, that from the circumstance of our Lord's refusing to give him the desired evidence, Satan had come to the conclusion that Jesus was not the incarnate Son of God, but only a great saint, yet still a man, against whom, as such, he might, unmasked, press other suggestions, more bold and gross.

This satanic suggestion was, as has been said, an act of desperation, and more an outbreak of vicious rage and satanic scorn than a temptation.

Believers also have frequently the same to suffer from the devil which their Master encountered in the wilderness, whilst he tempts them with the most abominable propositions, and infuses such blasphemous and detestable thoughts into their souls, that they shudder at their enormity.

But be comforted and undismayed, ye oppressed souls. That the wicked one thus buffets and spurns

you, arises from pure vexation and disappointment, that he is not able to swallow you up. Look upon these temptations as the revengeful vapouring of a powerless enemy, who, since he cannot prevail with sword and sling, throws mire and filth, to irritate you, at least; and if he cannot succeed by other means, endeavours, in this way, to give vent to his rage.

XV.

THE ISSUE OF THE CONFLICT.

SCARCELY had Jesus received the blasphemous counsel—scarcely had he glanced into the mirror of earthly glory and pleasure, which the devil had the insolence to hold before him—when it was fully manifest with whom he had to do. “These are thy possessions, thy kingdoms,” thought he, “and thou requirest to be worshipped? Thou art detected, thou foul spirit, the mask is fallen off, I know thee.”

With horror and disgust, the pure soul of the great High Priest turned away from the images of vanity and lust which Satan had conjured up before him. He grasped the iron shield of the word of God, against which all the fiery darts of the wicked one are quenched, and spake with the majesty of the first-born, to whom is given all power, both in heaven and in earth—“Get thee hence, Satan, for it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.” (ver. 10.) Then did not the devil dare a second time to arrogate to himself divine honour—he was stricken to the ground—the battle was ended; and the Lamb of God stood pure, without spot, victo-

rious—the triumph achieved. With the sword of the Spirit, the written word—in the obedience of faith—did Jesus lay the dragon completely in the dust.

The temptation over which our Lord here came off victorious, not unfrequently is presented to his beloved children.

We have already remarked how Satan is able sometimes to show us, in his magic mirror, the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them, in a moment of time. O yes; even the most holy upon earth must be conscious, that in the experience of the children of God, either hours or moments may sometimes occur, when the enjoyments and seductive allurements which they supposed to have been long before, by the grace of God, utterly dead, are again exhibited in the most attractive light before the eye of their imagination. Then does the sea of their senses and desires become impetuous and raging, and Satan leaves nothing untried, that he may drown the poor soul in this flood.

At such moments it is said to us quickly, unexpectedly, before we can recollect ourselves, "All this will I give thee if thou fall down and worship me." Behold, we have only to do some little thing to gain all those golden mountains; it is only a little turning aside, of which, perhaps, no man may be aware; only a momentary prostration before the tempter; only a transient homage, and all is ours.

And O, my beloved, David and Solomon are not the only ones among the children of God who have been guilty of such a fall, that they might once more drink of the intoxicating cup of earthly pleasure.

Yet, in whatever way these falls may have taken

place, we feel deeply for our brethren who have been so surprised, and we condemn them not. No, we do not despise them; for we know our hearts, and are aware what we are, and how the tempter can paint the world so beautifully before the eyes of man, and give such enchanting colouring to its vanities. We are aware of this, and our prayer is, every moment, "Lead us not into temptation."

The wicked one, indeed, cannot be concealed when he draws near to us with such visions and shameless propositions. The enjoyments and treasures which he presents to us, and describes so glowingly, and the means which he proposes, by which we may become possessed of the same, betray him.

In such temptations as these he approaches us, not as an angel of light, but without the mask, and boldly. We then soon know who is our adversary, and this renders the struggle more easy.

We cannot, indeed, retire from the scene of conflict unwounded as Jesus; and seldom, without any motions of sinful inclination, can we withdraw from the sight of those seducing enchantments. And well is it for us if we only escape before that lust hath conceived and brought forth sin, (James i. 15.) and if unscathed, we can quit the field.

The weapons with which our Lord so easily repelled the last onset of the tempter are ours also, under similar circumstances—"It is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

This word, when uttered in faith against the devil, will break his strongest darts, as though they were stubble. And as often as he sees this armour flashing upon our breasts, his hopes will languish, and he can

only attempt to move us to do him reverence, and fall down for a moment at his feet.

“Then the devil leaveth him, and behold angels came and ministered unto him.” (ver. 11.) This was the termination of this great and most important conflict; and never has Satan fled from any field of battle with such feelings of discomfiture; never has he, with a soul so torn and distracted, quitted an antagonist as at that time he must have left the fearful opponent of his kingdom. For to be so bruised upon the head, and to be compelled to lay down his weapons with so much shame, was as insupportable as it was strange to him. (Gen. iii. 15.)

As a dark cloud of the night, which the stormy wind drives, he hurried away, his fiery eyes rolling in desperation, and gnashing his teeth; and gladly would he cry to the mountains and hills to fall upon him, and cover him both from heaven and hell, that he might not hear the triumph of the angels over him, nor be upbraided by the hollow murmurings and howling cries of the spirits of hell at such a shameful overthrow.

But our Lord is safe. O how pleasing must it have been for him, after having been left, most fearfully, forty days, with the powers of darkness; (for Luke tells us, ch. iv. 2, that he is forty days tempted of the devil,) now suddenly to find himself in his own element again amid the blessed angels of God, who had come to pay their homage, and to minister to the mighty conqueror.

Then was fulfilled that which, in prophetic anticipation, the dying Jacob spake, “Judah is a lion’s whelp; from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he

stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion ; who shall rouse him up ? (Gen. xlix. 9.)

Yet this cessation from strife was not the end of the battle, but only a short respite. Satan, says Luke, departed from him for a season. (Luke iv. 13.) It was not long before he again stood before Jesus in full array, in the plain, and he continued to follow him with his slings and other missiles, till the great Sampson vanquished him by his own death on Golgotha, and tore for ever the sceptre from his hands. (Judges xvi. 30 ; Col. ii. 15.)

When the blood of the Lamb of God stained the accursed tree, then was the head of the serpent bruised according to the promise. (Gen. iii. 15.)

Our life, also, beloved children of the cross, will prove a scene of conflict even to the end. Days of repose and rejoicing will not be wanting to us in the wilderness, but the full unbroken Sabbath awaits us in the heavenly Canaan, in that rest which remaineth to the people of God. (Heb. iv. 9.)

As long as we dwell in these pilgrim-tents, the devil will not suffer his sword to rest in the scabbard—the roaring lion will not cease to go about seeking whom he may devour.

And when he shall cease to *triumph* over us, yet will he not desist from his *attempts*, nor suffer his wrath to cool ; but, by buffeting and otherwise assailing us, he will cause us to feel his hatred and his scorn. But let us not fear. “Thanks be to God,” we may joyfully exclaim with St. Paul, “Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor. xv. 57.)

The victories of our Surety are all ours through

faith. We have already triumphed before the conflict—and when also the dust of our strife with the powers of darkness covers the battle-field, and the fiery darts by thousands hiss around our heads, even when we fall in death, we remain victorious, and become more than conquerors through him that hath loved us.

Thrice blessed truth ! inestimable faith ! Whosoever walketh by this faith, his courage will never fail, and though he may *fall* in the struggle, *yet shall he rise again*, and stand erect, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand. (Ps. xxxvii. 24 ; Micah vii. 8.)

“ Happy art thou, O Israel : who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency ! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee, and thou shalt tread upon their high places.” (Deut. xxxiii. 29.)

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